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Short-duration country programme document

Mexico

Summary

The short-duration draft country programme document for Mexico is presented to the Executive Board for discussion and approval. The Board is requested to approve the aggregate indicative budget of $628,000 from regular resources, subject to the availability of funds, and $3,000,000 in other resources, subject to the availability of specific-purpose contributions, for the year 2007.

* E/ICEF/2006/18.

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The situation of children and women

1. The current country programme is based on the view that the greatest obstacles to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the universal fulfilment of the rights of children in Mexico are exclusion and inequality. Although Mexico is one of the world's largest economies, and despite significant social advances made over the last years, a number of key indicators of the well-being of children remain below those of other countries with similar or lower economic levels, and there are great inequalities between regions, and between ethnic and income groups.

2. Data for 2002 and 2004 show a reduction in the number and proportion of children and adolescents living in poverty, from 62.7 per cent to 58 per cent. Nevertheless, this latter figure represents more than 22.7 million children, of whom 9.5 million live in extreme poverty.

3. The number of children of primary school age that are out of school has decreased by nearly half (from 2.2 million in 2000 to about 1.04 million in the 2005/2006 school year). However, 17 per cent of the children in extreme poverty in rural areas do not go to school, as compared with 7 per cent of the non-poor in urban areas. In terms of the quality of education, according to internationally standardized assessments, Mexico is in last place of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries.

4. Mexico still lacks an adequate system for child protection. For example, the juvenile justice model does not guarantee the rights and due process of adolescents in conflict with the law. To address this issue, in 2005, the Mexican Congress approved a Constitutional Reform allowing for a specialized justice system for adolescents that is in line with the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

5. Presidential and legislative branch elections will take place in July 2006, with the new President taking office in December 2006. This political transition will offer new challenges as well as opportunities for both the bridging and new country programmes.

The country programme, 2007

Summary budget table

	(In thousands of United States dollars)		
Programme	*Regular resources*	*Other resources*	*Total*
Child rights in public policy	173	900	1 073
Special protection of the rights of children	145	775	920
Rights of indigenous children	115	1 150	1 265
Cross-sectoral costs	195	175	370
Total	**628**	**3 000**	**3 628**

6. An other resources ceiling of $3 million is proposed, an increase of $787,000 over the 2006 level. This proposed increment reflects increasingly successful fund-raising and partnerships with the private sector and covers the additional funds needed for new initiatives planned on the basis of mid-term review (MTR) recommendations. Between 2001 and 2005, private sector fund-raising (excluding the tsunami and Hurricane Wilma emergency appeals) grew at an annual rate of 47 per cent, while private individual donations increased 86 per cent yearly. This is clear evidence of the growing commitment and willingness of corporate and local donors to support the rights of children.

Reasons for this short-duration submission

7. The current country programme is being extended for one year following a decision adopted by the United Nations country team (UNCT) to harmonize United Nations agencies' cooperation programmes in the framework of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) as of 2008. This date was established taking into consideration Mexico's upcoming elections and the need to negotiate a common action framework with the new presidential cabinet. Preparations for the Common Country Assessment and UNDAF (2008-2012) are under way this year, and in 2007 UNICEF will present the new country programme to the Executive Board.

Goals, key results and strategies/relationship to national and international priorities

8. The goal of the country programme is to support progress towards the Millennium Development Goals by assisting in the formulation and implementation of policies eliminating exclusion and inequity, at the federal, state and municipal levels. UNICEF will continue to promote three key strategies that have proved successful: (a) utilizing data-based advocacy tools (such as the Child Rights Index) and social mobilization through communication initiatives; (b) promoting dialogue and consensus on the part of diverse sectors of society, with actions centred around initiatives such as the All Children in School and Social Dialogue initiatives; and (c) strengthening mechanisms for public accountability and transparency of public institutions. These strategies build on the success achieved by the country programme in leveraging local and federal resources with a relatively small investment by UNICEF. The focus and relative emphasis of interventions have been aligned to the UNICEF medium-term strategic plan for 2006–2009, specifically with relation to focus area 5, "First call for Children".

9. The main expected results for 2007 are the following: (a) The Child Rights Index will be used to create consensus and to generate changes in public policy for the fulfilment of children's rights. The Index will be a national reference for measuring progress in reducing exclusion and in achieving of the Millennium Development Goals in education, nutrition and health; (b) Five out of 32 states will institutionalize the social dialogue among government and civil society, with a view to defining goals, plans of action, budget allocations and monitoring mechanisms for the rights of children, and implement legislative and administrative reform in juvenile criminal justice and protection, based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and (c) In four states, out-of-school children will be included in school, and child labour will be reduced, in particular among children of migrant workers.

Short- and long-term goals for (b) and (c) will be defined in consultation with state counterparts during 2006.

Programme components

10. The existing programme components of the country programme will continue, focusing on several key areas in 2007.

11. **Child rights in public policy**. The promotion of pro-rights public policies, defined as a priority strategy during the MTR, will focus on three main areas: (a) the consolidation of the Child Rights Index; making visible the disparities and inequalities between states, identifying those with the greatest gaps and need of technical assistance; (b) the establishment of Social Dialogues between government and civil society, to promote broad social mobilization and alliances, will be implemented in five states; and (c) the generation and dissemination of knowledge. To this end, the following studies/analysis will be completed and disseminated by the end of 2007: (i) a study on the impact of poverty on the child rights; (ii) an updated analysis of child labour and the establishment of a regular child labour survey; (iii) updated information and an analysis of the impact HIV/AIDS on adolescents; and (iv) a comprehensive analysis of the impact of international migration on children and women.

12. **Legislative reform**. The rights of adolescents in conflict with law in at least five states of Mexico will be guaranteed by a state juvenile criminal justice law based on the Constitutional amendment, and local legal institutions will have adapted their administrative and institutional procedures in accordance with the new legal framework. UNICEF will contribute by continuing to generate political consensus and alliances around these initiatives and to provide high-quality technical assistance.

13. **Special protection**. A main focus of this component will be the development of a comprehensive protection model at the municipal level in four municipalities in accordance with the Law for the Protection of the Rights of Children and Adolescents, approved in 2000.

14. **Rights of indigenous children**. As recommended in the MTR, this programme component will focus on education, since indigenous children are the most excluded from the education system and because education is a catalyst for combating social exclusion and achieving child rights, including the right to a cultural and ethnic identity. The All Children in School initiative will continue as the main strategy and will be consolidated in four states. Goals for reducing the numbers of out-of-school children will be agreed upon with counterparts at the end of the current school year.

15. **Emergency preparedness and response**. Following Hurricanes Stan and Wilma in 2005, the UNCT decided to create a United Nations inter-agency group on Emergencies and Disaster Relief (UNETE), which is currently led by UNICEF. By 2007, UNICEF and UNETE will have a common strategy to address emergencies and disasters and to define an immediate response in coordination with the Government. UNICEF will also provide technical assistance to key partners in the All Children in School initiative to improve local capacities in prevention and emergency response.

Major partnerships

16. In 2007, emphasis will be placed on strengthening partnerships with two key sectors not strongly involved in the previous country programme: indigenous organizations at the national level and in some key states; and universities and education centres. Indigenous organizations will be encouraged to play a more active role in promoting the rights of indigenous children, particularly through basic education in a context of respect for their culture and diversity. Universities and educational centres will work with UNICEF to generate knowledge in areas relating to children, and to promote and organize high-level debates on public policy for children.

Monitoring, evaluation and programme management

17. No major changes are anticipated. However, in line with the monitoring mechanisms defined in the MTR, child rights monitoring and certification mechanisms will be established in three states. The impact assessments of the Child Rights Index as well as the All Children in School initiative, will be priorities in 2007. The evaluation from a child rights perspective of the *Oportunidades* ("opportunities") Programme, the largest poverty-reduction programme in Latin America, will take place in 2007. There will also be an evaluation of a survey on violence and abuse against children. The aim is to establish a permanent mechanism to monitor violence and abuse at the national level. Special emphasis will be placed on joint evaluations with counterparts and partners.